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President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 46

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/305)

The President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, on behalf of the Western European and other States, in a letter dated 10 October 1997, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the Observer of the Holy See during the debate on agenda item 46.

Members will recall that in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly, observer non-Member States may normally make statements only in the Main Committees. However, following consultations, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the Observer of the Holy See in the course of the debate on agenda item 46?

It was so decided.

Mr. Saguier Caballero (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for the delegation of Paraguay, in its capacity as coordinator of the Rio Group, to make this statement on agenda item 46, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development".

First of all, the Rio Group would like to thank the Secretary-General and the relevant offices of the Secretariat for the report presented on this subject, contained in document A/52/305, which will be of great use in our work.

The States members of the Rio Group attribute particular importance to the issue of social development in all its aspects and are totally committed to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, as reflected in resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995.

At the eleventh summit of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in Asunción, Paraguay, in August this year, our leaders agreed that the elimination of extreme poverty, the achievement of social justice, the promotion of forms of citizen participation, as well as the improvement of standards of living and the general welfare of our peoples are permanent objectives for our countries and can be more easily achieved through cooperation and coordination between democratic Governments.

The Rio Group has demonstrated its commitment to the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development on several occasions and, more importantly, it has done so concretely and practically. In 1995, in response to a

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call by the Government of Argentina, the Rio Group approved the Buenos Aires Declaration on the follow-up to the World Summit on Social Development, aimed at the regional implementation of the Copenhagen commitments.

In 1996, the Heads of State and Government of the Group gathered in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where they reaffirmed their determination to overcome poverty, malnutrition, marginalization, the lack of access to health care and illiteracy, through policies that would lead to sustainable economic development in the medium and long term. The participants at the Asunción summit this year also reaffirmed their conviction that a sustained process of economic and social development is fundamental for democratic stability and the improvement of standards of living for people.

In addition, the countries of the Group took an active part in the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit on Social Development, held in São Paulo in April 1997 by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). That Conference approved the São Paulo Consensus, whose commitments are duly reflected in the Secretary-General's report. The Rio Group here reiterates its support for the appeal made in the São Paulo Consensus to hold meetings in other regions to evaluate the Social Summit, an appeal that was also welcomed in Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/56.

In addition, the Rio Group has followed with particular interest the initiatives of both Governments and institutions to comply with the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit. We welcome, for example, the micro-credit summit, a valuable initiative that covers an aspect that other policies designed to fight poverty have not been able to deal with effectively. The Rio Group also joins in the approval expressed by the Economic and Social Council of the decision taken by the Interim Committee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to grant permanent status to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF). We also share in the belief that there is a need to establish necessary safeguards for social equality, a decisive factor in the success of structural adjustment programmes.

With regard to the results of the thirty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development, the Rio Group attaches great importance to the multi-year programme of work for the years 1997-2000, with "Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development" as its substantive theme. The agreed conclusions on productive employment and sustainable livelihood, transmitted to the Economic and Social Council, reflect the interest in continuing the search for policies that will permit the achievement of total employment.

In regard to future activities, the Rio Group will actively participate in the thirty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development when promotion of the social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, is discussed.

Moreover, the Group will make every effort to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 to carry out an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, and to consider further actions and initiatives. In this regard, the preparatory process for the special session will be of the utmost importance. The Rio Group hopes that the preparatory committee of the whole of the Assembly will begin its work in 1998, pursuant to resolution 51/202.

The concept of social development places great responsibilities on us which the member States of the Rio Group will continue to shoulder with responsibility and determination at both the regional and national levels. At the intergovernmental level, we will continue our efforts so that the work of the Organization may give effective guidance to Governments in their struggle to eradicate poverty and achieve complete human development.

Mr. Wolzfeld (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus have aligned themselves with this statement.

It is two years since 117 Heads of State and Government meeting in Copenhagen adopted a Declaration and a Programme of Action which marked a major advance in the international community's perception of the development process by placing people at the centre of its concerns. The participants in the Copenhagen Summit committed themselves to pursuing as prime goals the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and the fostering of stable, safe and just societies.

The international community recognized at Copenhagen that no country, however rich, could remain

unaffected by social problems. At the same time, it defined a new consensus on the question of development, whose principal goal should be to benefit the individual; development policies should be aimed at that goal, with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and, in particular, equality between men and women.

The Heads of State and Government further agreed at Copenhagen to give the goals of social development and human well-being

> "the highest priority both now and into the twenty-first century" [*Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, para. 12*]

and to define an integrated approach to social development at the world level.

Through the three-pronged approach adopted by the Summit, States committed themselves to pursuing the objective of eradicating poverty in the world, promoting full employment as a fundamental public-policy priority and promoting social integration by fostering stable, safe and just societies on the basis of respect for human rights, non-discrimination and the closest possible involvement of all in decisions affecting their well-being.

The Programme of Action identified full employment, coupled with appropriate rewards, as an effective means of combating poverty and promoting social integration. It is essential that job creation be at the heart of national strategies and policies. Special attention should be given to developing employment and to the need for providing quality jobs, with full respect for the rights of workers as defined in the pertinent international instruments, in particular, those agreed in the context of the International Labour Organization. In this connection, we welcome the agreed conclusions adopted at the latest meeting of the Commission for Social Development during its discussion on productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, which should serve as a useful reference for national Governments.

Unemployment remains a matter of grave concern within the European Union. Although the conditions for economic recovery in Europe exist, the level of unemployment is still far too high, and employment continues to be a priority issue for the European Union and its member States. The new European Union Treaty — the Amsterdam Treaty — reinforces the Union's social dimension in following the agreements of the Summit for Social Development. The new Title on Employment, the inclusion of the agreement on social policy in the Treaty and the further possibility of cooperation in the area of social exclusion recognize the importance and the universal dimension of social development and of improving the human condition.

The Copenhagen Declaration acknowledges that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions for social development are the responsibility of each State. Owing to the diversity of situations across the world and the complexity and interdependence of social development factors, universal application of a uniform strategy is out of the question.

Yet Governments cannot invoke the need to take account of each country's specific situation in implementing the most appropriate strategy as an excuse for going back on commitments they freely entered into at the Social Summit and at international conferences. Governments cannot rely on their achievements in one area in order to neglect other areas; they cannot point to lack of development in order to justify the denial of equality or the rights of persons belonging to minorities or native populations.

Development is not just about economic growth. The Programme of Action proclaims that the ultimate aim of social development is to improve the quality of life for all. The achievement of that aim presupposes, among other things, the establishment of an open and democratic regime, with Governments being accountable to the people for their actions and individuals having full access to decision-making at all levels. It presupposes increased opportunities — equal opportunities — for all, the rule of law and respect for diversity and for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. It equally implies social justice and an equitable distribution of income and wealth, along with government action to enshrine the rights of the individual in law and to ensure that such rights are respected. These, and all other commitments must be implemented in full.

We should like to reiterate here the importance we attach to participation. Such participation should extend to all, men and women, and especially to members of vulnerable groups, including the representatives of persons living on the fringes of society, as well as the handicapped, the young and the elderly. The aim of social integration is to create a

> "'society for all', in which every individual ... has an active role to play." (*Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, para. 66*)

Measures to promote such integration should be tailored to the emerging needs of the persons concerned and take advantage of the development of new technologies.

The Copenhagen Summit acted as a catalyst in giving a fresh boost to the drive for better integration of economic and social aspects in the development process. It recognized that social development continued to be a national responsibility, but at the same time stressed that the support, firm commitment and collective efforts of the international community were essential if the objectives defined in Copenhagen were to be achieved.

The European Union is convinced that the international community must provide support both bilaterally and multilaterally, in particular for the least developed countries, if it wishes to help create the necessary conditions to enable Governments to take the initiative in assessing poverty situations and formulating national strategies and programmes to combat poverty and to promote social development. Poverty eradication and social development are essential aims of the cooperation between the European Union and the developing countries, as the Maastricht Treaty shows. The European Union has therefore become seriously involved in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee, particularly in the strategy entitled "The role of development cooperation at the dawn of the 21st century". We shall need to look closely at ways of effectively mobilizing financial resources, including those from private sources, to combat poverty and promote social development, and at ways of more effectively directing cooperation and development aid.

The European Union will endeavour to honour our undertaking to achieve the aim agreed by the United Nations of setting aside 0.7 per cent of our gross national product for official development assistance as soon as possible. We encourage the other developed countries to follow suit. In this regard, the present downturn in the percentage of gross national product allocated to official development assistance remains a matter of concern. We are prepared to step up efforts to reverse this trend, in view of the need to reinforce the quality and usefulness of official development assistance. All countries should attack the root causes of this downturn in a spirit of global cooperation. Strategies should be developed to increase the aid provided by donors for assistance programmes and revive the undertakings which they reaffirmed at the World Summit for Social Development. Some countries have reached or even surpassed the agreed 0.7 per cent target.

A new partnership should be based on the recognition that development financing is a joint responsibility and should be reflected in a fairer and more widespread distribution of the burden. The quality and impact of aid will need to be improved, in particular by eliminating the fragmentation or duplication of effort. We also note the work done by the countries concerned to develop the 20/20 formula, particularly at meetings which followed the adoption of the Oslo Consensus.

The World Summit for Social Development, which enabled the international community to adopt a specific development perspective, was not an isolated event. The results of earlier Conferences, particularly those held in Rio, Vienna and Cairo, were taken into account when the final document was drawn up. The commitments entered into in Beijing were themselves based on the outcome at Copenhagen. Governments as well as the United Nations system should therefore implement those results and ensure an integrated follow-up to them.

We believe that the Economic and Social Council should consider each year, under the relevant agenda item of the general segment, progress made between Governments and organizations, as well as achievements on the ground. The Council should also continue to harmonize and coordinate the work programmes of the technical committees responsible for following up major conferences. Finally, the President of the Council could consult regularly with the chairmen of those committees in the presence and with the participation of representatives from the Secretariat branches concerned.

Here, the European Union welcomes the discussions held on the subject at the Economic and Social Council's most recent substantive session. We consider that the resolutions which resulted show that definite progress has been made.

To ensure an integrated follow-up to the World Summit, a mechanism was set up to operate at three levels, with input from the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, with the latter acting as principal decision-making body on questions relating to the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit. In this connection, we

recall that, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/52/305) the General Assembly's Preparatory Committee of the Whole, which will be set up at the fifty-second session, should meet after the annual session of the Commission for Social Development, since it was decided that its core activities would be based on the information provided by the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council.

We should also like to reiterate the importance of ensuring an integrated follow-up both in the framework of the three-level mechanism and in the United Nations operational development activities.

I should like to conclude with three points that are deserving of our attention, with a view, particularly, to the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for the overall appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, when social integration and the participation of all will be the watchwords.

The World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, which the Portuguese Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, will be organizing in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998, will provide the platform for an assessment of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond at the national, regional and local levels and for the preparation of new proposals on how the Programme should be implemented on the basis of a more effectively targeted intersectoral approach.

We welcome the decision taken at the last meeting of the Economic and Social Council to renew Mr Lindqvist's term of office for a further period of three years, and we recall the Council's request to the Secretary-General to give greater priority to activities concerning persons with disabilities and to set aside the necessary resources to enable the Secretariat to perform its function as a focal point.

The International Year of Older Persons, which will be celebrated in 1999, will provide an opportunity to promote the vision of a future "society for all ages" by, among other things, encouraging the involvement of persons of all generations in the preparations for the Year. The European Union is delighted to note that preparations for the Year are proceeding apace, with the participation of the elderly in particular in the development and implementation of activities at the national and local levels.

Mr. Jabir (United Republic of Tanzania): On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the report "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" (A/52/305), and the report on poverty eradication contained in document A/52/315. We also welcome the *Human Development Report 1997*, which includes an analysis of global poverty and provides suggestions on new ways to measure and combat poverty.

I wish at the outset to reaffirm our full commitment to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action.

There have been considerable efforts by the developing countries to act on the specific areas of both the Declaration and the Programme of Action, focusing, *inter alia*, on policy formulation, the elaboration of programmes and strategies, and the setting of time-bound targets for poverty eradication. Particular attention has been paid to the needs of special groups, as well as to the participation of civil society. Similarly, mechanisms and focal points have been established. While these initiatives are at different levels of implementation, according to the priorities and capabilities of individual countries, the fact remains that they need to be supported, strengthened, and sustained.

At the regional level, it is encouraging to note that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organized the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development at São Paulo, Brazil, from 6 to 9 April 1997. We welcome the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, to be held in Manila from 5 to 11 November 1997, to review national progress achieved and regional actions taken in the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region. We would also encourage other regional groups which have not yet convened similar forums to do so. In this regard, we request the international community to support such endeavours by providing the necessary financial resources, including support in the implementation of the outcome of these meetings.

Eradication of poverty remains a priority goal of all developing countries. However, despite increased efforts to eradicate it, the total number of people living in poverty is increasing. The majority of the population of

these countries continue to live in extreme poverty, unable to access basic human needs such as nutrition, health, water and sanitation, education, employment, housing and participation in cultural and social life.

We acknowledge the fact that high and productive levels of employment are fundamental means of combating poverty, ensuring equity, meeting people's aspirations for participation in economic and social life and enhancing social cohesion. However, we are concerned about the negative impact of the globalization of the world economy and trade liberalization on social development, particularly in developing countries. The development efforts of developing countries, in particular for the provision of essential social and economic services, are severely hampered by the inadequate flow of financial resources to these countries. The burden of external debt continues to be one of the major concerns of developing countries. The Group of 77 and China urge the international community to work for a durable solution to the debt problem of these countries, particularly those of Africa and the least developed countries. The other priority of our Group is the need to evaluate the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on economic and social development and to assist those adjusting countries in creating conditions for economic growth, job creation, poverty eradication and social development.

The Group of 77 and China, while recognizing social development and the implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development to be primarily the responsibility of Governments, stresses that the mobilization of resources, at both national and international levels, remains one of the major constraints to developing countries. In this regard, I recall that in resolutions 50/161 and 51/202 the General Assembly recognized that the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action in developing countries would need additional financial resources and more effective development assistance. The Group therefore reaffirms the urgent need to reverse the trend of decline in official development assistance, which remains the principal source of development financing for most developing countries. We urge the developed countries to fulfil the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance as a matter of priority.

We recognize that micro-credit programmes are a key strategy in promoting self-employment, income generation, eradication of poverty, empowerment of people, particularly women, and enhancement of social integration through facilitating access to credit for the poor. In this regard, we welcome the outcome of the micro-credit summit held in Washington, D.C., from 2 to 4 February 1997, which launched a global movement to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial services by the year 2005. In order to reach that goal, we need to establish new micro-lending institutions and/or strengthen existing ones in order to facilitate the access to credit of people living in poverty. We call upon all regional and international institutions, including the specialized agencies working to eradicate poverty, to come forward to help attain the goals of the micro-credit summit.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirm the importance of employment growth and the urgent need to ensure that it is placed at the centre of economic and social policy-making in conjunction with other important goals. We also recognize the need for improvement in the design of policies and programmes to enhance employment opportunities for groups with special needs — women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities — so as to combat their exclusion from the labour market. In this connection, we emphasize the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes aimed at employment creation, as well as the need to include gender impact analysis as a regular feature in all stages of the overall policy-making process. In the same vein, the Group recognizes the need to effectively address the challenge of modifying employment policies, in order to ensure the increased participation of disabled persons in the labour market.

We also attach great importance to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and call for the participation of all relevant organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations and related international organizations to assist developing countries in their efforts to implement that Programme of Action. The Group welcomes the holding of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 8 to 12 August 1999, and requests the United Nations to facilitate the participation of developing countries, particularly those from Africa and the least developed countries.

The International Year of the Older Person in 1999 will provide the opportunity to shed a global spotlight on the longevity revolution that will be one of the greatest challenges our developing countries will have to face in

the next century. The world population is ageing dramatically. A steady stream of 1 million persons a month now cross the threshold of age 60, and 80 per cent of these are in developing countries. By the year 2025, the total number of persons aged 60 and above will be 1.2 billion — and 70 per cent of them will still be living in our developing world. It was the recognition of this demographic revolution and its implications for our developing countries that led the Group of 77 and China to submit a draft resolution to the General Assembly, adopted as "Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging". This landmark resolution, adopted by consensus on 29 November 1985, emphasized that older persons must be considered an important and necessary element in the development process at all levels within a given society.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirm the importance of the Commission for Social Development, as the functional Commission of the Economic and Social Council with the responsibility to follow up on the World Summit for Social Development, and in this regard looks forward to the thirty-sixth session of the Commission, which will be held in February 1998, with the priority theme of "Promoting social integration and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons".

We welcome the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We support the establishment of a preparatory committee of the whole of the General Assembly, which, under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/202, will begin its activities in 1998. The Group of 77 will endeavour to take all necessary measures to ensure the success of the special session.

In conclusion, the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development for poverty eradication, enhancement of productive employment and social integration calls for concerted international action to integrate the economies of developing countries into those of the developed world. The promotion of equal terms of trade, increased production capacities and financial flows and technology transfer and acquisition are among the major steps towards the achievement of high, productive employment and sustainable livelihoods, resulting ultimately in poverty eradication. As we prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for the overall review of the outcome of the World Social Summit, let us bear in mind the realities in the developing countries and honour our commitments made in Copenhagen. We call upon our development partners, the developed countries, to support the developing countries, through technical and financial cooperation, in their efforts to improve their ability and their competitive capacity to participate in the global economy on an equal basis.

Ms. Kaba Camara (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): The World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in March 1995, brought together an impressive number of world leaders, demonstrating the importance the international community attaches to social issues, which are a gauge of progress in the world.

The participants in the Social Summit committed themselves to take steps to eradicate poverty, combat unemployment and achieve social integration for those on the fringes of society. However, at the global level the major concern is above all to combat poverty. It is obvious that a policy to combat poverty cannot but improve the living conditions of the unemployed and those at risk.

What have we done to honour the commitments we undertook at the Social Summit?

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focusing its attention and its efforts on human development, has placed emphasis on social indices of health care, education, nutrition and social protection in order to demonstrate the level of instability experienced by the poorest populations.

UNDP's *Human Development Report 1997* concentrated on poverty eradication, studying the causes of poverty in a changing world and the relationship between globalization and poverty. That report pointed out that 507 million of the world's population have a life expectancy of less than 40 years; 1.2 billion people do not have access to drinking water; 158 million children are suffering from hunger; 842 million people are illiterate; and 1.2 billion are living below the poverty threshold. Those statistics speak volumes and reveal the extent to which combating poverty should be the priority in the coming years, both for international organizations and agencies and for every nation.

Although it is true that all States, to varying degrees, are affected by poverty — for in some countries there are pockets of poverty, whereas in many others,

especially in Africa, it is an endemic phenomenon — the international community must support the efforts of the poorest countries to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

More than half of the population of Africa, which is regarded as one of the United Nations priorities, are among the poorest. Some of the countries on our continent are facing famine, endemic diseases, AIDS, fratricidal wars — internal factors that exacerbate poverty inside those countries, to which are added such external causes as the fall in the price of commodities, the burden of foreign debt, barriers to access to foreign markets and the drastic drop of nearly 30 per cent in official development assistance. These factors have worked to nullify the efforts of African Governments to meet the basic needs of their peoples.

At the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Africa held on 25 September of this year, emphasis was laid on the fact that peace and security cannot be achieved in conditions of abject poverty. Economic and social statistics on sub-Saharan Africa are a dire reflection of the living conditions of its peoples: of the region's 500 million inhabitants, 262 million live on less than $1 per day, 290 million are illiterate, 200 million have no access to drinking water and poverty continues to take its toll.

The Secretary-General's report (A/52/305) on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development demonstrates the enthusiastic response of United Nations organs to questions pertaining to the eradication of poverty. The Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women, the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, regional commissions and development institutions have all considered at their meetings the various aspects of poverty and strategies to combat it. This is encouraging. However, my delegation hopes that future seminars, round-table discussions and expert studies will enable development bodies and bilateral donors to come up with concrete programmes and plans to attack the root causes of poverty and bring a glimmer of hope to poor populations.

My delegation welcomes the initiative of the micro-credit summit to mobilize financial resources to help the poorest, and especially women, to gain access to credit. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has made available to poor young people and women social funding to encourage employment. However, that praiseworthy initiative at micro-financing is only one aspect of efforts needed to eliminate poverty.

UNDP believes that for every inhabitant of developing countries to have access to basic social services, $40 billion needs to be invested yearly during the period from 1995 to 2005. That sum represents only 0.2 per cent of world income, 1 per cent of the income of developing countries and half the resources mobilized by the United States within the framework of the Marshall Plan to assist in the reconstruction of Europe.

Those figures clearly show that the eradication of poverty is not a utopian notion if the political will exists.

This political will must translate not only into increased resources for official development assistance, but also into the creation of conditions conducive to the economic and social development of our countries.

Africa needs realistic programmes with concrete results. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa all came and went without having any real impact on the eradication of poverty in Africa.

The international community should support the African countries in their attempts to achieve the goals they have set themselves. To that end, it should take into account, *inter alia*, the following priorities defined by the Organization of African Unity: to establish an African economic community through regional and subregional integration to respond to the challenges of the globalization of the economy; to maintain peace and political stability, without which development is impossible; to promote human-resource development; to accelerate the continent's industrialization; to facilitate access to the external markets for African products and to promote the diversification of commodities; to eradicate poverty and to make basic social services accessible to all; to improve the living conditions of women and children; and to consolidate democracy and good governance.

We need a global and integrated approach, for the fight against poverty requires us to take into account all these factors for social and economic development and the well-being of peoples.

As the head of our delegation said during the general debate, we reiterate our appreciation for the

partnership initiatives undertaken with the aim of helping Africa grow and develop its economic potential, improving its access to external markets and reducing its external debt burden.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that my Government welcomes the positive actions undertaken by several countries on behalf of Africa, in particular the initiative of the European Union referred to earlier. Any action targeting projects to promote African development, and especially the struggle against poverty, deserves our acknowledgment and gratitude.

Mr. Shafie (Malaysia): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" and contained in document A/52/305. The report provides an important and useful framework for our deliberations in this Assembly. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China this morning.

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen two years ago represents a landmark achievement for people-centred sustainable development. Three core themes were addressed at the Summit: the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment, and the promotion of social integration. The Copenhagen Declaration and the World Summit's Programme of Action reflected both national and international development efforts, recognizing that while social development remains a national responsibility, the support and collective commitments of the international community are essential for achieving the goals set out in Copenhagen.

One of the major factors affecting social policies today is the globalization and liberalization of the world economy. While globalization increases the opportunities for greater economic growth, it does not automatically bring faster growth and development. Its process has risks and costs, including social costs. As economies and societies become increasingly interdependent due to the growth of international commerce, investment and finance, as well as growing communications and transport linkages, social problems become globally diffused. In most cases, globalization may have contributed to or aggravated existing social ills, such as unemployment, or led to increasing income inequality.

Globalization offers great opportunities, but only if it is managed more carefully and with more concern for global equity. In this regard, all countries and major international economic and financial agencies need to engage more seriously in efforts to formulate better policies towards globalization. The impact of globalization on countries and sections of society must be examined more deeply. Poor countries, increasingly marginalized from the world economy, need special support to help them reap the benefits of globalization and integration. New forms of international cooperation must be devised that will make it possible for all to share in the positive aspects of economic globalization.

The eradication of poverty remains a priority goal of all developing countries. It is indeed very frustrating that, despite repeated pledges by Governments to fight the scourge of poverty, more than a quarter of the developing world's people still live in abject poverty. Nearly a billion are illiterate and over a billion lack access to food and safe water. Nearly a third of the people in the least developed countries are not expected to survive beyond the age of 40. Within these broad groups, some people suffer more than others, particularly women, the young, the old and the disabled.

While the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen's Summit have effectively defined the issues relating to poverty, employment and social integration, issues on international assistance, official development assistance and new additional resources have failed to break new ground. At the same time, major donor countries have been reluctant to provide additional resources, while they try at the same time to maintain the high moral ground on human rights and fundamental human freedoms. It remains a disappointment that States Members of the United Nations seem able only to define the pressing issues of our times, such as poverty, and to repeat the call for political commitment to alleviate such problems. But the manifestations of political will, as the most critical ingredient in our efforts for a better world, remain elusive.

Malaysia believes that the eradication of poverty is central to all efforts to enhance social development. To achieve this, the international community must do its level best to fund and apply additional resources to help assist the development efforts of the developing countries. For this to happen, the developed countries must make every effort to fulfil the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. We would urge developed countries to join the four

countries that have fulfilled their official development assistance target so as to enable the developing countries to undertake their social development programmes, particularly in the areas of education, health and training.

We believe that serious consideration must be given to the immediate cancellation of the bilateral, multilateral and commercial debts of the least developed countries, without imposing conditionalities that hurt the poor and vulnerable. The benefits of debt relief could be channelled to support education, health care, credit and poor rural development. This would, in turn, enable poor countries to create an opportunity to promote foreign and private investment and economic growth.

We are encouraged by the outcome of the micro-credit summit held in Washington early this year. We applaud that initiative taken by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies in mobilizing billions of dollars to provide loans to millions of the world's poorest families. This is indeed a move in the right direction to address the problem of poverty and unemployment in the least developed countries.

Every country needs sound policies and strategies for reducing overall poverty. However, this process needs to be undertaken by Government and civil society, including the private sector, in partnership. Malaysia welcomes the constructive contributions of all the members of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the efforts to realize the agreed goals of the Social Summit.

In Malaysia the non-governmental organizations and the private sector have complemented the Government's programme for the poor and hardcore poor by providing them with income-generating projects, improved infrastructure and amenities and by implementing programmes to inculcate positive values among the poor. We believe this is also the case in many other countries. We welcome the contributions of the members of civil society at both the national and international levels, so long as they facilitate and do not impede the consensus-building process at the intergovernmental level.

Eradicating poverty is not an unattainable goal. The world has natural and human resources as well as the know-how to make a poverty-free world a reality. The challenge for us now is how to mobilize action at the international and regional and national levels. Malaysia strongly believes that with serious efforts and commitment from all parties the targets set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action to eradicate poverty, unemployment and other social problems can be achieved.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to say first of all that the delegation of Mexico shares in the statement made by the representative of Paraguay on behalf of the Rio Group.

The holding of the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 is one of the most significant events in the recent history of the United Nations. The Summit emphasized the importance of joining the opportunities provided by the processes of economic liberalization and globalization with the need to invest in the well-being and development of societies.

At the Copenhagen Summit we outlined the objective of orienting our economies to respond to human needs in a more effective manner, on solid bases and with a long-term view. We undertook commitments and agreed on measures to make progress towards the three priority objectives: poverty eradication, generating productive employment and social integration.

Two years after the Summit, Mexico continues to implement concrete actions to comply with the goals contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. My Government has promoted a social development policy whose purpose is to raise the quality of life of Mexicans and to combat effectively and comprehensively the deep-rooted causes of the problems of marginalization and extreme poverty which, I must acknowledge, still exist in my country.

The economic growth recorded in 1996 and 1997 has made it clear that the recovery strategy of recent years is the right one. The objective is and of course will be to improve progressively the standard of living and well-being of Mexicans. The strengthening of the economy has led to a significant increase in social spending. This year social spending in Mexico will rise to more than $34 billion, which represents almost 56 per cent of the public sector budget and is equal to 9 per cent of the gross national product. This amount means an increase of approximately 10 per cent, as compared to spending in 1996. Of that social spending 86 per cent will be allotted to the areas of education, health and social security.

In order to ensure that the resources for social spending reach those who need it most, the Government

of Mexico has implemented a series of broad-ranging programmes which, while they are directed at the population in general, give particular attention to Mexicans who face the most difficult living conditions.

In this context, this year we have undertaken an education, health and food programme. Its objective is to treat the causes of extreme poverty in an integral way through a series of specific activities. The effort is focused on three basic areas: the expansion of the social infrastructure, the creation of greater employment opportunities and providing support services for education, health and nutrition. By implementing this programme we seek to promote family participation, giving special attention to girls and boys.

Additionally, in order to broaden and raise the quality of public medical services, a reform of the national health system has been undertaken through the Health Programme 2000, from which some positive results have already been achieved, particularly for people with limited resources.

One of the main results of the economic and social strategy has been the creation of between 1.3 and 1.4 million jobs this year. This is undoubtedly an encouraging sign.

We are aware that there are considerable challenges to be met in order to overcome the remaining historical poverty which still affects millions of people. That is why we are determined to continue to adopt measures to strengthen the tie which exists between growth and social equity, thereby fulfilling one of the main commitments of Copenhagen: namely, to create the conditions which will make the human being the main actor in development, and therefore a participant in and beneficiary of the national well-being.

The Summit underlines the fact that social development and the fulfilment of the commitments adopted are primarily the responsibility of each country. At the same time, it points out that it is essential to establish a favourable international environment based on international cooperation for development.

We note with concern that despite the dynamic state of the world economy, the inequality between developing and developed countries is growing. The President of the World Bank recently declared that, given the present rate of population growth, in 30 years five billion people will have to survive on less than two dollars per day. The outlook could not be gloomier. At the same time, and as a painful paradox, the development assistance promised at the Summit as an essential element for achieving social development has declined considerably. In many cases, this decline has made it more difficult to achieve the goals established in Copenhagen, and made the possibility of doing so more remote.

It is essential to reverse this trend. If we do not, we will find ourselves at the beginning of the new millennium in a terribly discouraging situation. Economic growth, social justice and shared responsibility are indivisible. National efforts require the support of the entire international community. It is necessary for all parties involved — Governments, the United Nations system and the system's financial institutions — to redouble their efforts to strengthen international cooperation.

This is not merely an act of solidarity. It is also a historical responsibility to mankind.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): At the World Summit for Social Development, Heads of State and Government and world leaders came together to work out strategies for social development, especially how to find solutions related to such questions as poverty, employment, social integration and other socio-economic issues. Most significantly, the highest commitments were made with the adoption of the Declaration and the Programme of Action.

The delegation of Viet Nam associates itself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China.

We are pleased to note that since the Summit considerable efforts have been made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. In putting their commitments into practice, Member States have developed strategies, programmes and projects and included them in their overall socio-economic development policies. The United Nations and its agencies have also made great efforts in this regard, for which my delegation wishes to express its great appreciation. Those efforts are commendable, but what is left to be fulfilled is enormous if we wish to achieve a better environment for social development, especially in the coming decades of the next millennium.

Our delegation is very much encouraged to see that the United Nations has been playing a leading role in the field of economic and social development and providing

assistance and support for the efforts of nations. In this regard, we welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of the Agenda for Development. On this occasion, we express our full support for the strengthening of the United Nations, especially the Economic and Social Council, and agree that the United Nations should accord development the highest priority. This will enable the United Nations and the Economic and Social Council to play a more effective role in this field, contributing to the creation of a favourable environment for social development. We therefore welcome the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, in particular the identification of the promotion of sustainable and sustained development as a central priority of the United Nations. With this strengthened United Nations role for development, it is our belief that the United Nations will certainly be able to support nations more effectively in their implementation of the recommendations of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. We wish to take this opportunity to commend the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation, which is composed of comprehensive and far-reaching assessments of global social issues as well as recommendations for policy options.

As has been recognized by the Summit, social development is central to the needs and aspirations of people throughout the world and to the responsibilities of all nations. To achieve progress, we need to tackle the three main issues — poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration — with an integrated approach. In reviewing the two-and-a-half-year follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit, while addressing the various issues of social development, I shall focus on the question of poverty alleviation and eradication, which is the most urgent and basic task currently facing the larger part of the world population: that of the developing world. As pointed out at Copenhagen, social development is the result of many related issues. Poverty remains an acute problem for most developing countries, due to slow economic growth and low income, very often aggravated by the increasing burden of debt. Poverty has been a major factor constraining the efforts of these countries to provide better living conditions for their populations and to create a more favourable environment for social development. Poverty and economic difficulties have given rise to greater unemployment and have at the same time limited their capacity to provide better-quality education as well as other basic needs for the daily life of the people, such as water, sanitation, health care and other social services. Under such circumstances, many developing countries would find it extremely difficult to escape the downward spiral toward backwardness. We recognize that great efforts have been made by developing countries, resulting in considerable progress. But as the general picture shows, the question of poverty and its alleviation continues to call for greater common efforts. In this regard, we also urge that greater support and assistance be given to developing countries by the international community. All commitments related to the establishment of a favourable international environment for social development need to be more effectively realized.

With regard to poverty alleviation, we commend the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its important role in the United Nations system and for its efforts to support the implementation of social-development programmes. We support UNDP's efforts in fighting world poverty, considering it to be UNDP's most important job. In many developing countries, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and many other United Nations agencies have effectively helped develop national strategies for poverty eradication and plans of action. These strategies include promoting high rates of economic expansion, creating employment, investing in human-resources development, advancing and expanding opportunities for the poor, targeting poverty and providing a safety net for vulnerable groups such as children, women, the disabled, the old, poor people and others.

Mr. Kpotsra (Togo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At the same time, these anti-poverty strategies are to be defined and implemented in the larger context of creating an environment that encourages and supports equitable, broad-based economic growth and social development at both the national and international levels.

The 1997 *Report on the World Social Situation* has noted that the problem of unemployment appears more difficult to solve today than it did 50 years ago. It is necessary for us, therefore, to give greater support and assistance to the efforts of developing countries aimed at expanding their economy and productive activities that can generate employment.

For all countries, whether developed or developing, a good educational system is the key to progress in the field of human resources development, which in turn will ensure development and prosperity, especially in this information age and in the coming twenty-first century. A well-educated, highly developed and healthy population constitutes one of the most valuable resources a country can have.

Viet Nam is fully committed to the objectives and principles stipulated in the documents of the World Summit for Social Development. We have made combined efforts to achieve our socio-economic goals and to realize the commitments we set at the Summit. The process of renewal in Viet Nam, carried out since 1986, has achieved a considerable reduction in poverty and a higher standard of living and well-being for the people. Building on our many remarkable socio-economic achievements over the past 10 years, we must continue to make greater efforts to consolidate our achievements and advance further in the field of socio-economic development, with a view to attaining the goal of "wealthy people, a strong country and a just and civilized society" for Viet Nam through the process of industrialization and modernization. In order to do so, the Government has formulated policies to bring about further progress in, *inter alia*, poverty alleviation, productive employment expansion and educational reform.

Special attention is being paid to education, science and technology in order to lay the foundations for industrialization and modernization. Viet Nam has consistently pursued a policy of economic development in parallel with social progress and equality. In this context, we support the 20/20 initiative as one of the measures aimed at achieving access for all to basic social services. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Viet Nam has agreed to host the second follow-up meeting on the 20/20 initiative, known as Oslo + 2, in Hanoi next autumn. We see it as a positive response to the calls of the World Summit for Social Development for joint efforts by many countries. In this regard, my delegation welcomes all the countries supportive of the idea, in particular Norway and the Netherlands.

Earlier this year, in September, Viet Nam and the United Nations agencies held a conference in Hanoi to review 20 years of cooperation between Viet Nam and the United Nations and to work out strategies to enhance further that effective cooperation.

In closing, I wish to express once again our deep appreciation to the United Nations agencies for their assistance to Viet Nam, especially those in the fields of poverty elimination, health care, education and social integration.

Mr. Oda (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to state at the outset that the Egyptian delegation supports the statement made by the representative of Tanzania as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China.

It is clear that the promotion of social development has become an important and basic objective in today's world. Similarly, support for the efforts made to achieve social progress and justice and to better the human condition is urgently needed in order to respond to the aspirations of peoples, who are asking that pride of place be given to the social aspects of development because of their close interrelationship with its economic and political aspects. This interconnection is such that these aspects now form an indivisible whole that can affect — positively or negatively — international peace and security.

The States that took part in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen have become aware of the need to achieve social development. Convinced of the need effectively to tackle the problems confronting them in this area, they have committed themselves to creating an economic, social, political, cultural and ecological environment that is conducive to social development, as well as to giving priority to national and international policies and initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty, promoting employment, combating unemployment and fostering social integration.

I should like to emphasize two key points that should serve as guiding principles in the area of social development. First, different cultures and civilizations must be respected, because there can be no justification for replacing them with unacceptable lifestyles and practices. Secondly, although we acknowledge that Governments must play the primary role in the peace process, we believe that in order for those efforts to be successful a favourable international environment must be created, including the proper conditions for trade, investment, the provision of financial resources, technical assistance and the transfer of technology.

Poverty is one of the greatest challenges our world faces. Governments and the international community must intensify their efforts effectively to combat poverty, especially since we have committed ourselves to this goal as a moral, social, political and economic necessity for all humankind.

The issue of productive employment and sustainable livelihoods is closely linked to the question of poverty. Unemployment has become so endemic that it could rend the social fabric of many developing countries, especially since the trend is towards economic policies aimed at fighting inflation and budgetary deficits at the expense of employment and conditions of work.

Egypt has participated actively in the work of the Commission for Social Development, of which it is proud to be a member. The Commission, which at its thirty-fifth session considered the question of employment and sustainable livelihoods, reached certain agreed conclusions that have as their goal productive employment; decreasing unemployment through improved social services, such as education and health care; giving loans to the private sector in both urban and rural areas; and improving information and guidance services.

We encourage all countries to participate actively in the work of the Commission during its upcoming sessions. In this respect, we are particularly hopeful that efforts will be made jointly to take up the major challenge of preparing for the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for the overall review of the World Summit for Social Development. Egypt hopes that the special session will be well prepared, generate strong interest and achieve the necessary consensus for its success.

The issues of families, women, children, young people, the elderly and the disabled are closely related and complementary, and they affect the overall development of every society. My country appreciates the enormous efforts made by developed and developing countries alike to address the great challenge of sustainable economic and social development, despite the weighty responsibilities imposed upon them by economic reform.

Egypt has begun the implementation of an integrated policy for the year 2000, to reduce poverty and achieve human development. Contrary to a predicted decline in public spending, spending on public services has been increased from 3 per cent to 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product, especially in the area of education. Beyond its ongoing efforts to provide basic education and health care for all in cities and in villages, Egypt has built up and is bolstering a network of social services intended to help the poor by providing basic products and services and by offering productive employment. Our Fund for Social Development is one of the most important of our social-security networks. It has created jobs for some 10 per cent to 12 per cent of Egypt's unemployed, although the principal goal is not to fight unemployment but to limit the negative impact of the process of economic reform

The family is the keystone of development, and the Egyptian Government lays stress on its societal role for development. By 1996 my Government had established 150 special offices to address this issue. Young people are the pillars of the present and the symbols of the future. That is why Egypt has taken care to educate them and prepare them for the challenges of the twenty-first century, and why it has conducted seminars and established institutes to that end. It is our hope that the international ministerial conference on young people to be held at Lisbon next August will be successful.

My delegation welcomes the declaration of 1999 as the International Year of the Older Person, and supports the activities of the fourth meeting of the working group to consider and evaluate the plan of action and to make preparations for the Year. For its part, Egypt is making preparations of its own. In this sphere, my country has adopted a national programme for older persons, and has organized seminars to increase awareness of the issues of the Year. Egypt is also participating in regional and international preparatory efforts for the Year. Notably, we shall participate in the conference on the elderly in the Mediterranean region to be held in Malta in December. We hope that this will result in the adoption of a regional plan for the Mediterranean countries. My country attaches the highest importance to rehabilitation and training for older people to enable them fully to play their role in society, through the creation of good jobs appropriate to their skills.

Let me reaffirm the importance of combining national, regional and international efforts to promote and support social development in all its forms and in all spheres. I appeal to all States and Governments to commit themselves to implement the recommendations adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, and to honour their commitments, especially in the area of mobilizing resources and providing technical assistance to developing countries. Social development is a collective international responsibility that affects both our daily lives and the future of our world.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): My delegation welcomes and appreciates the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, contained in document A/52/305, and looks forward to his forthcoming report on the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. May I state at the outset that we fully align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as with the statement to be delivered later today by the representative of Lesotho on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The World Summit for Social Development was convened at a time when the countries of the world had identified common goals and a common drive: to cooperate internationally in creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to achieve social development.

It is encouraging to note that many Member States have reported to the United Nations on national action taken in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland has made great strides in drafting and negotiating a National Development Strategy of its own, and will provide the United Nations with a copy in the near future. The strategy represents a new, improved and comprehensive planning system. It contains long-term objectives, policies and strategies necessary to achieve the three broad objectives of a vibrant economy, good governance and human and social development.

Having realized the socio-economic difficulties which were emerging, including increasing unemployment, a high population growth rate, escalating crime and the disintegration of the social fabric among Swazi society, the Government initiated the National Development Strategy two years before the World Summit for Social Development was held at Copenhagen. The declining socio-economic situation called for an appropriate and effective strategy which would both mobilize popular support for the country's process of economic development and ensure effective use of resources. The strategy seeks to address the commitments made in Copenhagen at the national level.

As stated by His Majesty King Mswati III in his policy statement during this session of the General Assembly, our own internal restructuring programme is continuing, and the Government has begun a series of initiatives to improve the socio-economic situation. An important aspect of the initiatives reflects the amount of consultations and of participation by the stakeholders in the discussion of views and aspirations.

Our Economic and Social Reform Agenda — a two-to-three-year agenda which will contribute to, and accelerate progress towards the National Development Strategy — was launched in February this year as a selection of important actions and targets with clear deadlines attached to them. Again, the Government consulted widely and publicly, and the reports have been widely publicized.

The Kingdom of Swaziland is ever mindful that there is a need for an enabling environment conducive to the realization of sustainable human development. To this end, the Constitutional Review Commission was set up in July 1996 and was given the assignment of full consultation with the Swazi nation in drafting a new Constitution. The assignment is scheduled to take two years. The achievement of a universally recognized Constitution consistent with the culture and traditions of the Kingdom of Swaziland will be a very significant achievement.

The Government and people of the Kingdom of Swaziland are committed to effecting these initiatives, and for a very good reason. Socio-economic growth in its simplest form should result in the production of more goods and services with increased efficiency. The problem of unemployment would be addressed. Economic growth is the route to higher wages, greater profits and higher tax revenue, thus leading to improvement in agriculture, health education and other social services. Swaziland is set to put that sequence in motion.

It is unfortunate, however, that the Kingdom of Swaziland has a number of critical elements to deal with. The rate of population growth, at 3.2 per cent per annum, is too high. This presents a serious difficulty in achieving Commitment 3 made at the Social Summit, that of promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies and of enabling all Swazis to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work. Efforts to reduce the rate of population growth are under way. The Government has set up a task force to develop a population policy and a programme to reduce the population growth rate.

My delegation would also like to reiterate the concern expressed by His Majesty King Mswati III about the presence of El Niño in the Pacific Ocean, only five years after the last drought. All the countries in southern Africa have hardly recovered from the two-year drought of 1991 and 1992; now they will soon have to face these devastating problems again. Swaziland, having been hard hit in 1992, is still in the process of constructing water reservoirs and dams throughout the rural areas, by way of changing from the relief approach to early preparedness. Most unfortunately, the disastrous effects of the drought are foreseen to hit before the projects are completed.

On this same subject of natural disasters, we wish to extend our deepest sympathy as a country, to Mexico, which has recently been hard hit by floods, costing that country much social disruption, but also many lives. We therefore extend our deepest condolences to the Government, and in particular to the families concerned.

Having addressed some of the areas in which Swaziland is making efforts to honour commitments made in Copenhagen, my delegation would like to reiterate that international, regional and subregional cooperation and assistance are also essential for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

General Assembly resolution 50/161 recognizes that the implementation of the Declaration Programme of Action in developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries, will need additional financial resources and more effective development cooperation and assistance. It is disturbing to note, though, that while efforts are being made to develop such provisions, developing countries are still faced with major problems of external debt and debt-servicing, marginalization in the context of globalization of the world economy and problems of developed countries not fulfilling their commitments in achieving internationally agreed official development assistance targets. This is evidenced by the outcome of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council held in Geneva in July this year.

The Kingdom of Swaziland fully supports the holding of the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. It is our hope that the General Assembly, having learned from the achievements and failures in the five years since the adoption of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, will adopt further actions and initiatives.

General Assembly resolution 50/161 further invited regional Commissions to consider convening, on a biennial basis, a meeting at a high political level to review progress made towards implementing the outcome of the Summit, to exchange views on their respective experiences and to adopt the appropriate measures. The Secretary-General's report reflects on the outcome of the meetings held. It is regrettable to note that the Economic Commission for Africa has not yet convened such an important meeting, given that the world at the Summit focused on Africa in Commitment 7, which specifically called for accelerated efforts at economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries. In this regard, my delegation urges the Economic Commission for Africa, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and other intergovernmental organizations in the region, as well as the African Development Bank, to convene as soon as practicable a high-level meeting as called for in the resolution.

May I conclude by stating that the Kingdom of Swaziland appreciates the role played by the United Nations funds and programmes in the country, particularly that of the United Nations Development Programme. It is our fervent hope that as we formulate our strategies to advance our social and economic policies assistance will be forthcoming in the future whenever a request is made.

At a subregional level, Swaziland is committed to all the efforts of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Kingdom of Swaziland, one of the founding member States of SADC, commends all the assistance and cooperation given by United Nations Member States to the community, either bilaterally or as regional and subregional groupings, as well as from organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

Mr. Khan Kanju (Pakistan): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development.

Pakistan is one of those countries that have already started implementation of the Programme of Action in earnest. As we see it, the 10 commitments endorsed at the Social Summit broadly fall into two categories. In the first category are commitments to strategies which seek to establish an enabling environment for social development; and in the second category are commitments to ensure poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration.

As part of establishing an enabling environment, which is essential for social development, Pakistan has started implementation of both categories of commitment. We realized that the creation of a stable economic environment was essential for any meaningful development. We therefore started strengthening our economic liberalization programme, which was initiated in early 1990, by introducing reforms in the corporate,

banking and financial sectors. Maximum tariff rates were reduced; full convertibility of the Pakistan rupee on current account was achieved; and all import restrictions, with very few exceptions, were withdrawn. Now investors, both Pakistani and foreign, can invest in Pakistan without seeking prior governmental approval, except in a few notified negative areas.

Pakistan has also started a privatization programme in an open and transparent manner. All related documents are available for public scrutiny. A law on the freedom of information has been enacted to ensure that information on governance is available to all segments of society to encourage participatory and transparent governance. The Government also wishes to establish an environmental protection agency for enforcement and compliance with the National Environmental Quality Standards.

The corruption associated with governance has always been a matter of serious concern for the general public. The spread of this evil threatens the social harmony and smooth development of societies and countries. To create an enabling environment for development, the Government of Pakistan, under Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, has recently established an independent Accountability Commission, headed by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, to deal with corrupt elements in the highest echelons of the Government and to ensure probity in public life. This will help in eradicating corruption from public life as well as in making governance fully accountable.

Pakistan recognizes the role of non-governmental organizations and other actors in civil society in achieving social harmony and social integration. A law has recently been drafted to provide an institutional foundation to establish partnership between non-governmental organizations and the Government for the delivery of development and social services. This reflects the Government's belief in integrating community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations in the planning, implementation and delivery of social services.

Pakistan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the provisions relating to women are fully enshrined in our Constitution. The Government is making special efforts to bring women into the national mainstream by providing equal opportunities in all walks of life. In the general elections this year six women were elected on general seats to the National Assembly of Pakistan. A proposal is under consideration for 20 more seats, reserved for women, to be added to the National Assembly. The Government has decided to bridge the gender imbalance in the job market by giving preference to women in future recruitment in various fields. Women are also being encouraged to set up their own vocational centres, for which the Government would provide financial assistance.

Pakistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 1990. Since then, the National Commission on Child Welfare and Development in the Ministry of Social Welfare has become a focal point for coordination with provincial governments and non-governmental organizations for implementing the Convention on the Rights of Child. To ensure that all children are provided with equal opportunities for education, a compulsory education act of 1995 has been enforced in the Province of Punjab. Other Provinces are also formulating similar laws. The Child Offenders Act 1995 has been approved by the Federal Cabinet and is awaiting parliamentary approval. This Act provides for the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents.

In another effort, the Ministry of Social Welfare is in the process of starting a project to establish homes for the destitute. These homes will provide shelter, education, health and other facilities to target groups. The Government has also established 35 centres for the rehabilitation of children involved in child labour in the country. These will cater for the basic education, training, health care and recreation of the children. The centres will also provide some financial benefit to the child's family as part of measures to combat poverty and the economic exploitation of the child. The Planning Commission of Pakistan proposes to update the National Plan of Action for Children, which was launched in 1990, for incorporation into the ninth Five-Year Plan starting in 1998.

Unemployment and poverty, both human and economic, are the two major challenges confronting the resource-poor developing countries. Unemployment and underemployment undermine cohesion and stability. They represent a waste of resources and are a major cause of political instability in many regions of the world. The International Labour Organization has estimated that there are close to 1 billion people in the world who are either unemployed or underemployed. This accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the entire global labour force. The world community must move quickly to ensure the productive use of this enormous potential.

Poverty reflects a lack of access to basic human needs and a denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life. The United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report* for 1997 has estimated that a quarter of the world's population — approximately 1.3 billion people — live in severe poverty. It has described it, on page 2, as being scandalous,

> "reflecting shameful inequalities and inexcusable failures of national and international policy".

The report goes on to warn, on page 3, that

> "new global pressures are creating or threatening further increases in poverty."

This is alarming, and calls for urgent action.

In a modest effort to tackle the twin menace of poverty and unemployment, Pakistan has launched the four-year Social Action Programme Project II for 1996-2000, with an outlay of 270 billion rupees. It focuses on poverty eradication, primary education, basic health care, family planning, sanitation and rural water supply. The empowerment of women, the generation of employment and environmental protection have also been included within its framework. The Programme is geared to raising the state of human resource development in Pakistan. It emphasizes consolidation, capacity-building and assurances of sustainability through non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

The Government of Pakistan has also taken steps to mitigate the negative effects of the economic reforms on the disadvantaged and marginalized groups of society. These measures include the establishment of a Poverty Alleviation Fund; the implementation of the Rural Support Programme, through non-governmental organizations, based on participatory principles; the construction of farm-to-market roads; the provision of loans to enable the unemployed to start their own businesses; the provision of technical and financial assistance to micro-enterprises; the establishment of vocational and technical training centres, including training centres for women; financial and technical assistance to non-governmental organizations under participatory development programmes; the establishment of Health and Education Foundations for upgrading education; and health facilities and monetary support to the poor, the indigent and the disabled from the Zakat and Usher funds. In addition, the Government has established schemes like the National Individual Pension, Workers' Welfare Foundations, the Workers' Profit Participation Fund and the Workers' Children Education Fund, to improve the real long-term earning of workers.

Pakistan has started implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development in the belief that development implies upward movement of the entire social system. However, with its low level of domestic savings, it would be difficult for Pakistan to sustain this effort without international support. We earnestly hope that developed countries, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions will honour their commitments to earmark 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product for official development assistance and rescheduling of debts, as stipulated in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Without this support the dream of social development in low-income countries like Pakistan will remain an illusion.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) *(interpretation from Chinese):* Since the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the question of social development has drawn increasing attention all over the world. The short-, medium- and long-term strategies and plans for social development formulated by many countries and the concrete measures taken in this regard have brought about progress in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit at the national level. The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Social Development and measures taken to implement them have also played a positive role in promoting social development. However, when discussing such progress, we must also point out that action has been rather slow in developing the substantive international cooperation promised at the Summit. Concern on this question is therefore justified.

As is well known, poverty is the major obstacle to social development as well as a serious threat to peace and stability. The eradication of poverty is of paramount importance to the international community. It was therefore the first of the three core issues discussed at the Summit. However, more than two years after the Summit, we see no major improvement in the social situation of the world. One fifth of the world's population continues to live in absolute poverty. Heavy indebtedness continues to plague some developing countries, seriously hampering their efforts for economic growth and social development. The gap between the North and the South continues to widen. It is surely the main responsibility of each country's Government to achieve the objectives set

at the Summit, but international cooperation and support are vitally important for the promotion of global social development.

It is our view that the key to the eradication of poverty is the availability of resources, for the lack of resources is one of the important factors hampering the efforts of developing countries to combat poverty and backwardness. To achieve the objectives set at the Summit, we maintain that:, first, developed countries should, at an early date fulfil their obligations to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance and take more concrete measures for developing countries in terms of economic assistance, technological cooperation and the reduction and cancellation of debt. Secondly, the United Nations should focus its efforts for social development on developing countries and play a central coordinating role in promoting the follow-up to the Summit. Such a role should centre on ensuring comprehensive implementation of the outcome of the Summit and of a number of important international conferences related to social development, particularly as regards mobilizing and assembling financial resources, to help developing countries eradicate poverty and promote social development. Solid progress by the United Nations in this regard will be its most valuable contribution to the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

May I take this opportunity to brief the Assembly on China's implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

In its Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000) for National Economic and Social Development and the Outline of the 2010 Long-Range Objectives formulated in 1996, the Chinese Government set the monumental goal of basically eradicating poverty by the end of this century. The Plan and Outline are now being implemented in poverty-stricken areas in the form of development-oriented poverty alleviation.

Development-oriented poverty alleviation closely combines poverty relief with local plans for national economic and social development with a view to changing conditions for agricultural production in poverty-stricken areas and improving their ecological environment. In these programmes, local governments focus on supporting development of farmland and such infrastructure projects as rural roads, drinking water projects and small-scale irrigation works; on supporting the development of farming, animal husbandry, forestry, processing of farm products, transportation and marketing that directly affect food and clothing for households in poverty; and on supporting the development of resource-oriented and labour-intensive rural enterprises that can help local people shake off poverty and get rich by taking advantage of local resources.

The central Government has strengthened the management of poverty-relief resources, provided preferential treatment in terms of taxation and investment policy and launched an extensive and in-depth campaign to mobilize all social sectors to support the development of poverty-stricken areas. By implementing these and other, related measures, China seeks to attain the goal of providing adequate food and clothing for 12 million rural residents living in poverty in 1997 and basically to solve the problem of food and clothing for 58 million people living in poverty by the end of the century.

As always, China will support the efforts of the United Nations in the field of social development, take an active part in international cooperation for social development and make its appropriate contribution to social development in the world as a whole.

Mr. Baali (Algeria): *(interpretation from French):* May I begin by expressing my unreserved support for, and endorsement of, the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China by the representative of Tanzania.

The mobilization of the international community around social issues, illustrated by the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, clearly shows that social issues are now the major concern of all societies, whatever their level of development, their culture or their political system.

Thus, the universality of social problems and their seriousness then put social development in terms of urgent needs calling for concrete operational and realistic solutions — solutions which, while they may vary in their implementation, in the final analysis all stem from the same vision and proceed from the same approach.

In spite of the major political changes around the world, characterized, *inter alia*, by the end of the cold war and the promising prospects for the settlement of several regional conflicts, and in spite of formidable advances in science and technology, the fact remains that the hopes raised by this dynamic have not had the positive results we had hoped for in the social sphere. Moreover, and paradoxically, the world has seen an unprecedented exacerbation of social problems.

While it is true that responsibility for social development lies, first and foremost, with States themselves, which have the right and duty to implement appropriate policies to achieve that objective, it is no less true that this responsibility must be assumed, in a spirit of solidarity, by the international community as a whole, not just because of moral and political requirements that are broadly shared today, but also because of the enlightened self-interest of us all. This new and welcome attitude is unequivocally reflected in the commitments entered into by our Heads of State in Copenhagen.

The existence of a favourable international environment is an essential prerequisite, even more necessary than the means and resources that, subject to national constraints, are available to States for their social development efforts. The impact and role of international factors affect all countries' prospects for social development, regardless of their level of economic development. However, they are decisive in the case of developing countries.

Information provided both by the Secretariat and by specialized agencies gives an objective quantitative picture of where the phenomena of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration are most acute: the same places experiencing an increased deterioration in the terms of trade; protectionism; a fall in the prices of exported raw materials; and the drying up of financial flows. Many of our countries have seen their revenues dwindle, sometimes to a point where they can only afford to service their external debt — just at a time when the structural-adjustment policies and economic reforms that many of our countries have had to implement are making living conditions for the poorest sectors worse and exacerbating unemployment, poverty and the absence of well-being.

However, a consensus emerged in Copenhagen on the fact that poverty, unemployment and social disintegration are the true sources of social and political tension, and that they are known threats to the stability of States and international peace, security and cooperation.

Two years on, with the exception of some steps taken by a few United Nations institutions, international cooperation is, unfortunately, still limited. While we welcome the proclamation of 1997 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, it is essential that we make the necessary resources available to achieve this fundamental objective of the Summit. To this end, and in the framework of the reform of our Organization, development must once again be the central concern of the United Nations system since there is no better investment for peace than the promotion of development.

In this spirit, the United Nations must look for the best ways and means to make its activities in the area of social development more effective, including by strengthening coordination between economic and social activities and improving coordination with international financial institutions, since only through concrete and pragmatic programmes can our Organization get more out of the aid and assistance it provides to States for the establishment of social policies.

In Algeria the social dimension has always been at the heart of development, since development is only viable if it fosters genuine social justice and that is based on the values of humanism and national solidarity.

Thus, since its independence, Algeria has been committed to broad and far-reaching social transformations that have helped us make considerable progress in education, training, health, nutrition and employment.

Since independence, more than a third of the State budget has been set aside for education, which is still free of charge from primary school to university. By way of illustration, 7.7 million Algerians are now in educational institutions, whereas at the time of independence there were less than 100,000 students. Also by way of illustration, fewer than 1,000 Algerians were at university at the time of independence, as opposed to 400,000 today. Health care, as always, still receives a substantial portion of State resources, and there is still no charge for medicine in all hospitals and clinics in Algeria. Until last year, the State also subsidized basic foodstuffs so that the most disadvantaged sectors of society had to pay only a nominal price for them. Finally, since independence, millions of public housing units have been built for the poorest sectors.

Algeria is keen to preserve what it has achieved, in spite of economic difficulties due to financial constraints and the requirements of economic and institutional restructuring, which are designed firmly to put Algerian society on the path to progress and modernity through the creation of a more efficient market economy and the establishment of a pluralistic democratic society. This is a particularly serious concern today because of the difficulties inherent in the 10-year economic crisis and because of the new impetus that Algeria now hopes to give to its development dynamic.

Algeria has committed itself fully to the success of the Social Summit, and it has tried, since Copenhagen, to take the necessary steps to honour its commitments by creating, *inter alia*, an economic and social council, which is now a forum for dialogue and cooperation in economic, social and cultural spheres.

That Council comprises standing commissions, including a commission for the population and social needs, which identifies and assesses the results of policies to cover social needs — policies for demographics, employment, training, income and national solidarity — for the most disadvantaged socio-professional sectors.

Other steps taken in accordance with the commitments entered into in Copenhagen have also been implemented. These include the establishment of a social-development agency which, *inter alia*, is responsible for consolidating the social safety net for the disadvantaged sectors of the population; establishing bank credit guarantees to help small and medium-sized enterprises in the area of employment and training of young persons; creating local social-service units to strengthen follow-up and assessment; improving and restoring the social security system; and supporting the network of associations and non-governmental bodies.

Steps have also been taken to prevent exclusion and marginalization, and a social dialogue, structured and organized by the State and working with all our social partners and employers, has helped us to reach major milestones and convincing results.

It goes without saying that to be viable, this national effort must be backed up by a more favourable and fairer international economic environment that ensures the necessary conditions for the consistent implementation of economic reforms.

Copenhagen has raised many hopes, but Copenhagen can only change the daily lives of millions of people if words become actions through the effective mobilization of the international community. Our task is to find, through solidarity and joint effort, the mechanism for a new dynamic of peace and cooperation. This Organization that brings us together, can, if we wish, make it possible to set that dynamic in motion. Let us begin the work, here and now.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The World Summit for Social Development set in motion a process for a new global agenda for social and economic development. While scepticism abounds on the extent of implementation as we mark two years from the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, we believe the Summit outcome remains a unique and unprecedented framework for promoting social development worldwide. The General Assembly's consideration of this item in plenary is testimony to its commitment to accord the highest priority to the full implementation of the promises made at Copenhagen.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report outlining the progress towards implementation of the outcome of the Summit at the national and international levels. The Chairman of the Group of 77 has elaborated in detail our common concerns on this important item. We would therefore like to flag some issues of specific relevance to Bangladesh, and also share with this august body our experience in keeping the promises we made at Copenhagen.

While social development and the implementation of the commitments made at the Summit are primarily the responsibility of national Governments, it is also recognized that without international cooperation and assistance such implementation will not be possible. The core issues of poverty eradication, employment generation and social integration cannot be credibly addressed without adequate resources, access to trade and technology and a conducive external environment. In this context, the needs of the least developed countries can hardly be overemphasized. Despite the pledges made, the level of effective development cooperation and financial assistance remains far from adequate. Thus it is imperative to mobilize resources, including new and additional funds, to reinforce the efforts of the developing countries — in particular the least developed countries — to implement the outcome of the Summit.

We are encouraged to note that the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in July this year called for further efforts towards this end, in line with the recommendations of the Summit. We have also noted with satisfaction some of the concrete efforts being made by the United Nations system in the context of a coordinated follow-up to the Summit outcome. These include some initiatives by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), particularly in the context of micro-finance sectors as a tool for poverty alleviation, self-employment and social integration. The creation of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs to assist in the implementation of the follow-up to the Summit is an important decision, which we hope will

lead to more coordinated and focused implementation and follow-up efforts at the United Nations.

Our own experience with micro-credit programmes along the model of the Grameen Bank has demonstrated their viability as an effective tool for poverty eradication, and for achieving other goals of socio-economic progress and the empowerment of women and other disadvantaged groups. The Social Summit recognized the role of micro-credit mechanisms for poverty eradication. Resolutions adopted at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and at the thirty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development emphasized the need to support micro-credit efforts as a tool for poverty eradication and self-employment of women.

Earlier this year, in February, the first ever micro-credit summit was held in Washington, D.C., to highlight the effectiveness of micro-credit institutions and programmes for poverty eradication and empowerment of the poor. The Micro-credit Summit Declaration and Programme of Action launched a campaign aimed at bringing 100 million people out of poverty by the year 2005, and we would urge the international community to give its full support to the implementation of this greater goal for social development and empowerment of the poor.

In this context, we would like to underscore the need to intensify efforts at the national level to strengthen and establish micro-credit institutions as a strategy for poverty eradication and social development. We urge the international community to lend its full support and assistance to micro-credit institutions and micro-lending programmes. We also urge the United Nations agencies to internalize micro-credit in their programmes for poverty eradication and social development.

As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, Bangladesh has established a national committee to formulate a coordinated national programme of action to implement the outcome of the Summit. The Ministry of Planning has been designated as the focal point for implementation of the Summit outcome. In the country's fifth five-year plan (1997-2002), a pro-poor plan involving all relevant sectors has been integrated. Furthermore, legislative measures are being undertaken to integrate social development programmes into the activities of local government bodies.

The promotion of social development through poverty eradication, employment generation and human resources development remains the cornerstone of our national development efforts. With a view to implementing an integrated strategy for social and economic development, our development policy and programmes are formulated within the framework of broad targets for social development, aimed at meeting the basic needs of the population and increasing self-reliance. A major share of the development budget goes to the social sector, with highest priority given to education, health and family planning. Our strategies for social development include special programmes for enhancing the status of women, children, youth, the disabled, the aged and other disadvantaged groups. Full participation and equality of minorities and other marginalized groups are also priority objectives of our social integration and development efforts. And in all our national endeavours for social development, we have as our active partners non-governmental organizations and other actors from civil society.

The allocation for social sectors in the National Development Programme for 1997-98 is 37 per cent, far exceeding the Social Summit goal of 20 per cent in accordance with the 20/20 concept. Social indicators point to notable improvements in some social sectors as a direct result of the priority being attached to social development.

At the regional level, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has also undertaken a poverty-alleviation programme aimed at a coherent, integrated approach to addressing hard-core poverty at the grass-roots level.

We are encouraged to note the initiatives being undertaken by the regional commissions to implement the outcome of the World Summit. In this context, we would like to stress further the concrete support and assistance of the regional commissions for national and subregional efforts to implement the Summit's outcome.

There is a pressing need to harmonize our efforts and resources for social development. Bangladesh supports an effective machinery in which the United Nations system as a whole could be involved in the follow-up process. The role of the United Nations should be essentially supportive. Key impetus, however, must be provided by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development.

With political resolve and commitment, nothing can stop the momentum generated at Copenhagen. The

Copenhagen Summit refocused attention on urgent priorities for social development. It is up to us to renew today our commitment to the full realization of the goals of the Summit for Social Development and to the betterment of our society.

Mr. Seguro (Portugal): The United Nations Economic and Social Council, at its meeting on 23 July 1997, unanimously adopted a decision to hold the first World Conference of Ministers for Youth in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998. The Conference will be organized in cooperation with the United Nations, and all Member States are invited to attend.

The purpose of the World Conference is to broaden the debate on youth-related issues within the framework of the United Nations system, improving and implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

It is the Portuguese Government's view that the First World Conference of Ministers for Youth should not reopen the discussion of the text adopted by the General Assembly on 14 December 1995. Rather, it should focus on reviewing and evaluating the way in which Governments, in cooperation with young people and concerned intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, have implemented the measures recommended in the Programme of Action at the national, regional and local levels.

It should also set new guidelines for the effective enforcement of the Programme of Action, itemizing specific measures to solve problems which, although common to other sectors, are especially rife among young people — education and participation, unemployment, health and drug addiction.

The first World Conference of Ministers for Youth is being carefully prepared to promote cooperation between Governments and all who are involved in youth-related issues around the world. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the open and participatory manner in which the first series of consultations took place over the past three days, and I take this opportunity to express my thanks and recognition to all those who were present at those discussions.

The Lisbon Conference is seen as a new organizational approach, and it will be the first time in the Organization's 50-year history that the topics to be covered have been broached at this level. Another innovative aspect will be the creation of a forum at the opening of the Conference so that, young people can express their views.

While it is important to act with determination and caution, on the one hand, it is, on the other, vital to know how to innovate by implementing mechanisms that can support emerging models, consolidating the global and intersectoral dimension of youth policies in close coordination with national, regional and local authorities while not ignoring the various social actors, including young people.

By hosting this World Conference, Portugal aims to create a forum for solidarity among all who are striving to improve the lifestyle and opportunities of young people. It is our wish to follow a course leading to tangible cooperation at the local, national, regional and global levels.

This is why we give due credit to the work being carried out in each country and to that of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, as well as to the actions being undertaken by the various cooperation organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. It is with this in mind that we are following up on the work performed by several regional conferences of ministers.

We are also closely monitoring the proposals advanced by young people and by the organizations representing them, for it is our view that youth policies must benefit from the participation of the young themselves.

We are set to make the Lisbon declaration a vital instrument, one that includes tangible measures responding to such problems as unemployment, drug addiction, health care, education and participation. A final declaration that is no more than a letter of intent filled with noble principles is clearly not what is required. We aim to reach much higher. We seek definite and concrete proposals. It is our ambition to find, together with all the countries involved, a path leading to new prospects.

Of the world's population, 18 per cent is 15 to 24 years old, and we all know that millions of these young people live in subhuman conditions. Many of them are poverty-stricken, others do not enjoy good health and many are unemployed.

Millions of young people throughout the world do not have a definite target in life because our societies do not allow them, in practice, to put into action the fundamental rights embodied in our Magna Carta documents. We are fully aware that the lives of those young people will not change on the day after the Conference ends, but we do believe that the Lisbon declaration will give rise to cooperation that will increasingly and progressively improve their lives.

We therefore call for one and all — Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, agencies, intergovernmental organizations, institutions and young people — to commit themselves to and participate in the First World Conference of Ministers for Youth. What we propose is to accomplish a solid block of work to contribute significantly to fighting unemployment, poverty, drug addiction and disease. With that in mind, Portugal will be hosting next year the ninth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers for Youth, the first Conference of Ministers for Youth of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the World Youth Festival and the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, which is being prepared by the Portuguese National Youth Council.

I would like to end by reaffirming what I said in Geneva last July. It is important that the Ministers for Youth work together under the aegis of the United Nations to ensure the improved social and professional integration of young people.

We believe in a global, concerted youth policy. Clearly, we can speak nowadays not of a typical youngster, but of youngsters who, while sharing the same problems, experience quite diverse social and cultural realities.

On behalf of the Portuguese Government, we offer our hospitality, our experience and our determination in organizing the First World Conference of Ministers for Youth, in cooperation with the United Nations. We do not want the World Conference to act as a balm to our consciences. We want the World Conference to stress the values of peace, liberty, tolerance and respect for human rights. We want the World Conference to include youth policies among the priorities of the world's political agenda. We want to give young people reasons to believe once more.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Speaking on agenda item 46 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the delegation of Tunisia, while endorsing the statement made by Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, wishes to make its own contribution to our debate here today. I wish to focus my statement on the key elements of the implementation, both at the national and international levels, of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit, in anticipation of the special session of the General Assembly in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of this outcome.

The first point I wish to address in this regard involves international action to follow up the World Summit for Social Development. My delegation believes that international cooperation for social development is a necessary complement to activities undertaken by our countries in a world increasingly dominated by the globalization of the economy, which has not only benefits for the future of our planet, but also potentially negative consequences for development, and in particular could exacerbate the inequalities between countries and, within countries, between individuals.

My delegation feels that any action in this respect must aim principally at reducing overall poverty and eradicating absolute poverty, expanding employment and reducing unemployment — goals contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as in General Assembly resolution 51/202, adopted last year.

With respect to the fight against poverty, my delegation welcomes the actions undertaken to that end by the United Nations system — particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund — and acknowledges their efforts to elaborate national strategies in the campaign against poverty and to implement the 20/20 concept.

As concerns the "second-stage" action for social development — the fight against unemployment and its destructive effects on social cohesion and stability, particularly in the developing countries — my delegation welcomes the particular interest demonstrated by United Nations agencies in this subject, as manifest in the importance attached to achieving the goal of full employment by the International Labour Conference in 1996 and by the Commission for Social Development, meeting in early 1997. We feel, however, that any international cooperation in this area must aim first and foremost at reversing the effects of social upheaval caused by an increasingly integrated world economy.

International follow-up activities to the World Summit for Social Development must mobilize the entire international community in a spirit of solidarity and effectiveness in support of the efforts and sacrifices made by the developing countries in this sphere. It must be recognized, however, that the action currently being undertaken by the developed countries and the United Nations system is far from commensurate with the problems being faced by many countries, a great many of which are African. This inadequacy can be seen at the levels of official development assistance and investment and in the treatment of the debt problem.

In this regard, my delegation endorses the recommendations contained in resolution 51/202, which stresses the need to mobilize additional financial resources and more effective development cooperation and assistance.

In this spirit, it is essential and urgent that the international community strive for the fulfilment of the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible, and an increase in the share of funding for social development programmes commensurate with the scope and scale of activities required to achieve the objectives and goals of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

Similarly, we believe that it is important for the developed and developing countries to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes.

As regards debt, a genuine obstacle to development for many countries of the South, my delegation supports any initiative aimed at finding effective, fair, lasting and development-oriented solutions to the problem of foreign debt and debt-servicing faced by the developing countries.

As for the new and innovative ideas for mobilizing funds to meet the commitments and priorities adopted by common consensus at the United Nations summits and conferences, as contained in the Secretary-General's report on the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, we feel that they can neither replace official development assistance nor go to finance the regular or peacekeeping budgets of the United Nations. The search for new and innovative solutions for mobilizing funds must also fall within a larger perspective if additional resources for financing development cooperation are to be released.

Our Heads of State and Government recognized that social development and the implementation of commitments undertaken at Copenhagen fell first and foremost to the Governments themselves, even if international cooperation and assistance were essential to the full achievement of that objective.

In this spirit, and in accordance with resolution 51/202, which reiterates the appeal made to Governments at the Summit to elaborate national plans of action to follow up the Summit, I am pleased to recall the major efforts my country has already made in this area. Tunisia's pioneering and innovative achievements in this field have in more than one instance been reinforced by the decisions made by the international cooperation in the framework of the World Summit for Social Development. In this regard, my country has far exceeded the figure agreed upon in Copenhagen of 20 per cent of the national budget for social spending.

Tunisia's social development activities are ambitious and multidimensional; they are the cornerstone of our national policy to ensure well-being and prosperity for all our people. In particular, we have a progressive policy for the promotion of women, who are true partners in development; and an innovative policy to ensure that our children flourish, which can be seen in our adoption of a code to protect the rights of the child, as well as the establishment of a national commission to that end.

Another fundamental element in our national development strategy is the promotion of national social solidarity in our efforts to combat exclusion. This has led to the establishment of the National Solidarity Fund, one of our recent measures for the achievement of human development in Tunisia. Established in 1992 on the initiative of the President of the Republic, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the Fund is designed to finance initiatives to help people in low-income social categories and urban areas lacking minimum basic infrastructures. The Fund is financed through several sources, in particular, through voluntary contributions from citizens and businesses and grants from the State budget.

In 1993 a permanent commission for the Solidarity Fund was set up to define, with the help of central and regional administration services, criteria for identifying priority areas and to follow, with those services, the implementation and progress of projects. Six basic needs

have been identified: roads, drinking water, electrification, education, health and housing. In addition, among other things, there is a need for cultural centres, youth centres and sanitation, and to combat desertification.

In 1994 the Fund was entrusted with improving employment and income levels in the target areas and with rooting people to their lands and their areas of origin. This entails helping to create and consolidate sources of income.

Between 1993 and 1996 the National Solidarity Fund provided 35,160 homes with electricity and over 60,382 with drinking water. It enabled the building or improvement of 8,796 houses and the construction of 1,565 kilometres of roads and tracks, 75 schools and 71 health centres. To date, the number of projects financed by the Fund has reached 1,865, and 140,000 families have benefited.

The Fund has had a favourable impact on the populations concerned and on public opinion. It was therefore decided to set up a more ambitious national development programme lasting from 1995 to 2000, to cover all the areas of need.

In order to strengthen its development activities, the National Solidarity Fund became a State Secretariat within the Government in 1996. In addition, a Tunisian Solidarity Bank has been established on the initiative of the President of the Republic. Its main role will be to create micro-projects to provide stable funding in areas where the National Solidarity Fund is active, so as to put the finishing to the promotion of those areas. We feel that this new initiative responds perfectly to the spirit of the recommendations of the Copenhagen Summit, to which Tunisia remains firmly committed.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.